

Scott Hammen sez:

>Sometimes for me there's more magic in the watching if I DON'T know how things  
>were done. I love watching Brakhage's recent hand-painted films, for example.  
>But is this "honest" enjoyment if I don't want to know about the probably  
>painful physical effort that must go into making them?  
>

This is a good question; perhaps for me it's just my inquisitive nature; I don't think knowing how something's done is a requirement to enjoying the work. Phil Solomon, for example, refuses to divulge how he makes his films\*. That doesn't take away from my enjoyment of them. But sometimes knowing how something is done allows me a deeper appreciation of it, since I can then study how the maker used the process in a personal way, i.e. identifying the particular gestures and nuances. I can see how this might remove some of the mystery for the viewer, but for me it can still have that mystery on another level.

\*Phil Solomon's work, for those who don't know it: very richly textured works made by some "mysterious" combination of hand-processing, rephotography and optical printing. Lush grains, patterns and mosaics permeate the surface; the images behind them work their way out as if through a snowy haze. The soundtracks are often quiet and brooding. His most famous film is a super-8 film, "Remains to Be Seen", about his father's death; his newest, "Clepsydra," (sp?) deals with issues of innocence and abuse as a child.

Scott Hammen sez:

>The relation between the very private act of making or watching and the very  
>public one of talking (including the kind of "talking" we do in this list) or  
>showing your film to an audience is complicated. Are private pleasures  
>diminished or intensified by being made public?

Very possibly it's diminished; sometimes by trying to articulate something that's "inarticulable" -- such as a very personal response to something -- you end up projecting a limited range of possible meanings. But, hopefully for here anyway, talking about it through discussion and feedback can also elicit new meanings and responses.

--

Scott Stark

sstark@sirius.com

Mime-Version: 1.0

Date: Tue, 26 Dec 1995 10:50:48 -0800

Reply-To: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>

Sender: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>

From: Konrad <konradfs@NETCOM.COM>  
Subject: Re: Definitions  
To: Multiple recipients of list FRAMEWORKS  
<FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>

Scott Hammon wrote:

> Sometimes for me there's more magic in the watching if I DON'T know how things  
> were done. I love watching Brakhage's recent hand-painted films, for example.  
> But is this "honest" enjoyment if I don't want to know about the probably  
> painful physical effort that must go into making them?

It may be that what correlates to the more intense experience is when it DOESN'T MATTER how things were done. If a film is good, isn't my curiosity piqued only as an afterthought? The inquisitive response isn't a measure of quality (or admiration). However i would be concerned if i noticed i wanted to remain ignorant of someone's technique IN ORDER to remain spellbound.

>  
> The relation between the very private act of making or watching and the very  
> public one of talking (including the kind of "talking" we do in this list) or  
> showing your film to an audience is complicated. Are private pleasures  
> diminished or intensified by being made public?

Not trying to be flip, but the answer does depend on the particular pleasure, the particular person, and the particular audience, since both happen.

It seems that much of making or watching (and both involve aspects of each other) is 'talking to yourself.' But you can't do that unless you know what 'talking to others' means. On the other hand, it's often very difficult to convert from one mode to the other -- that can be the source for the diminished pleasure. This is a very interesting boundary for us.

konrad

Mime-Version: 1.0  
Date: Tue, 26 Dec 1995 20:58:22 -0800  
Reply-To: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>  
Sender: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>  
From: Konrad <konradfs@NETCOM.COM>  
Subject: Re: definitions  
To: Multiple recipients of list FRAMEWORKS  
<FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>

On Sat, 23 Dec 1995, Scott Stark wrote:

> > Thanks for the reference list. But let's turn the question  
> > around: You're a filmmaker, what do you think you're doing?  
>  
> Yikes!, this is a tough question, and I feel a little like I've got a gun  
> pointed at me, but in the interest of "talking about work" on this list  
> I'll offer a few thoughts of mine.  
[great reply snipped]

> There's also the question of who gets to see it, and what happens in the  
> viewing experience. I've shown work where there have been large numbers of  
> people, and shows where only 9 or 10 showed up, and while it's always a  
> high to pack the house, some of the best experiences I've had showing my  
> work and looking at others' work have been in small, intimate groups in,  
> say, someone's living room. With large groups I often get nervous and  
> figure a certain percentage of the audience doesn't like it and won't ever  
> tell me, while with smaller groups it all gets discussed. So perhaps what  
> it's really about is sharing one's work and insights with a small number of  
> close friends in a meaningful way.

This has also been my experience. So much so that sometimes it seems that my work is FOR living rooms, galleries or cellars where some contact is available beyond the question/answer period.

> ... But it's also interesting to be  
> provocative and engaging and hope that someone will become a bit more  
> sensitized to the process of watching and questioning.

I met a German expatriot in a cafe today who wanted to tell me how i could be a success when i told him i was a filmmaker. (This even after i told him i'd been doing it with satisfaction for 15 years!) My wife (also German) and i agreed he would have made a good American because his formula was entertainment + optimism = success. It struck me after this lesson that i have towards film a great deal of devotion but little trace of (worldly) ambition.

Sustenance comes in the form of, as Scott S. mentioned above, the gratification of personal connection through film, whether as influence, appreciation or dialogue with new friends or old ones. There is also the great pleasure and interest of working with the elements: editing, shooting, processing, printing and projecting. This can't be underestimated.

But guiding this is the desire to create and offer people an experience that's as alive and awake as i can create. I have seen other

filmmakers do it and i also want to share the exceptional joy i've found working with light and image. This work ends up being 'experimental' because 1) that's a convenient label against other genre and 2) the form is only sketchily indicated in advance and must be found through working with the shots, not shooting a script.

So right now the work i've done is for the people who've inspired me, for myself, and for the people who might be in turn moved by what i've done. In whatever measure and to whatever end, may it be some benefit.

Besides that, i agree with just about everything Alexander Soifer said in his post.

konrad

Date: Wed, 27 Dec 1995 04:27:00 EST  
Reply-To: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>  
Sender: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>  
From: Scott Hammen <74463.1464@COMPUSERVE.COM>  
Subject: Chamber Movies  
To: Multiple recipients of list FRAMEWORKS  
<FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>

Scott Stark said:

>some of the best experiences I've had showing my work and looking at others'  
>work have been in small, intimate groups in, say, someone's living room.

And Konrad responded:

>This has also been my experience. So much so that sometimes it  
>seems that my work is FOR living rooms, galleries or cellars where some  
>contact is available beyond the question/answer period.

I know it's perilous to draw analogies between different media but these comments brought to mind a thought I've often had:

If symphonies are written for performance in enormous halls to big audiences and chamber music is written for performance to small gatherings in private rooms, can we not speak also of "chamber movies"?

The filmmaker Jakobois called one of his Super 8 series "Cinema da Camera" (1986), thus evoking both a musical analogy and the fact that the original notion of "camera" was, after all, a small dark room where projected images could be seen.

I think also of Marie Menken's lovely little films, which often invoke musical forms in their titles ("Visual Variations on Noguchi" "Arabesque for Kenneth Anger," "Eye Music in Red Major.")

No one would suggest that listening to a 50 piece orchestra from a distant balcony is a similar experience to hearing a duet in a small room. Shouldn't we be similarly conscious of how some films need an intimate setting to be really appreciated?

-Scott Hammen

Date: Wed, 27 Dec 1995 10:14:53 -0500

Reply-To: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>

Sender: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>

From: malgosia askanas <ma@PANIX.COM>

Subject: Re: Chamber Movies

To: Multiple recipients of list FRAMEWORKS  
<FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>

I agree with Scott H. that there are chamber films, which want to be shown in chambers. But the funny aspect of this is that this "wanting" is not just an aesthetic "wanting", but it also means that there wants to be an economic avenue for film -- and other "chamber" forms -- which does not require playing within the system of economies of scale. The most common approach to this is to say that chamber film, unlike "symphonic" film, cannot be used as a means of economic support. This implies that one accedes, literally, to a \_value\_ judgement: chamber film differs from "big" film not just in terms of where, and to how many people at a time, it wants to be shown, but also in terms of its economic and social status -- it is something that agrees to be done "on the side", not full-time. The value of the filmmaker's time in the case of chamber films is here assessed differently than it is in the case of "big" films.

Now I should say here that I am not a filmmaker, but a performer. Right now, I work in a form whose connections with film I very much intend to cogitate about on this list: I do shadow-puppetry using an overhead projector. So a very crucial distinction between this and film is that it is infinitely cheaper than film; for this reason, the economic questions that I am trying to deal with may not even make sense in the case of film, because there is probably no way to recoup the cost of film materials through any "chamber" avenues. But the "raw" question -- how to position oneself outside of the economies of scale without thereby acceding to a "devaluing" of what one does -- may nevertheless be something you-all have been grappling with too.

-malgosia

Date: Wed, 27 Dec 1995 22:26:45 -0500  
Reply-To: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>  
Sender: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>  
From: Pip Chodorov <PipChod@AOL.COM>  
Subject: Re: Chamber Movies  
To: Multiple recipients of list FRAMEWORKS  
<FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>

Just a quick note to say that Maya Deren often referred to her films as "chamber movies" in the 1940's, using the same chamber music analogy. (Also because she often filmed in her apartment).

-Pip Chodorov <PipChod@aol.com>

Mime-Version: 1.0  
Date: Thu, 28 Dec 1995 20:11:30 -0800  
Reply-To: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>  
Sender: Experimental Film Discussion List <FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>  
From: Konrad <konradfs@NETCOM.COM>  
Subject: Re: Chamber Movies  
To: Multiple recipients of list FRAMEWORKS  
<FRAMEWORKS@LISTSERV.AOL.COM>

On Wed, 27 Dec 1995, Scott Hammen wrote:

> If symphonies are written for performance in enormous halls to big audiences and chamber music is written for performance to small gatherings in private rooms, can we not speak also of "chamber movies"?

This is a familiar idea. In fact two weeks ago several of us had films in a show called "Homescreeening" at the SF Cinematheque. It was kind of odd to bring 'living room' to the art-movie venue, and it actually functioned more like a plain old group show of locals' work. (We were a very homely group, though :)

However, the analogy only goes so far. It breaks down in two directions, economics and appreciation: 1) there was a patronage system in place when chamber music originated and 2) (as i understand it) chamber music was often played by the composers and patrons themselves, so they understood the workings of the piece intimately.

Much of the work that i know is 'chamber' in this last sense: 'filmmaker's film,' where certain (not all) gestures may only be understood by people who've worked in the medium, or better yet, close to the genre. On the other hand viewing this activity this way brings out a lot of overlaps with the term 'hobby.'

konrad